Elm Creek Silo
2.9 miles southeast of Leaday townsite
Voss vicinity
Coleman County
Texas

HAER No. TX-15

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Elm Creek Silo

HAER No. TX-15

Location:	Located 0.1 mile northeast of Leaday-Hill Road at point bridges crosses Elm Creek, 2.9 miles southeast of Leaday townsite, Voss vicinity, Coleman County, Texas UTM: 14.438924.3488954 Quad: Leaday
Date of Construction:	1914
Builder/Designer:	W. A. Miller
Present Owner:	Commerce State Bank of Kansas City, trustee for Jo Zach Miller, IV, et al.; permanent easement granted in 1986 to Colorado River Municipal Water District, Big Spring, Texas
Present Use:	Abandoned site
Significance:	This silo is a surviving example of a group of several silos built in the period just before the outbreak of World War I, when its site and much of the surrounding lands comprising the old Day Ranch were being developed as tenant farms. Although they failed to serve their function, because the anticipated grain production of the tenant farms was never realized, these silos nevertheless are monuments to the ambitious scheme of land development embarked on by the heirs of Mabel Day Lea and by the Miller family, purchasers of a great portion of the Day Ranch. The silos were poured in forms on the sites and a rock-crushing machine was kept with the forms and mortar-mixing equipment at the Day-Miller Ranch headquarters specifically for the silos construction project.
Historian:	Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University, October 1989

I. HISTORY

A. An Overview of Historical Context

For the general historical overview which places the property in the context of the development of ranching at the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers, please see HABS No. TX-3350.

B. The Site in the Nineteenth Century

The silo, known as the Elm Pasture silo, is on Day-Miller Ranch, located on land which was patented to the School Commissioners of Ft. Bend County in 1848 and sold by them to William Day in 1878. [1] The present-day ranch is part of an earlier Day Ranch, which comprised many thousands of acres, bordered by Grape Creek on the north, Elm Creek on the east, and the Colorado River on the south and west. The ranch encompassed a large portion of Coleman County. The silo site is on a portion of the ranch which Day fences and which became known locally as the Red Wire Pasture. At Day's death in 1881, ownership passed to his widow, Mabel Doss Day. Mrs. Day was left with heavy debts and a child, Willie Mabel Day. Her attempts to recover solvency and leave the ranch debt-free to daughter occupied her until her death. [2]

For a more comprehensive history of the Day Ranch and vicinity and for biographical information on William and Mabel Day, see HABS No. TX-3351, Mabel Doss Day Lea House; HABS No. TX-3363 and HABS No. TX-3362, Leaday Townsite.

C. The Site as an Early Twentieth Century Tenant Farm

One of Mrs. Day;s schemes for economic recovery was the subdivision of the ranch into a series of tenant farms, a plan which evolved over a number of years, and one which she researched and promoted indefatigably. One of the first projects realized by Mrs. Day was the staking out of the new town of Leaday in 1904. It was situated on the ranch three miles to the northwest of the silo site. [3] At her death in 1906, her daughter, now Mrs. Tom Padgitt, was forced to sell a large portion of the ranch to the Miller banking family of Belton; the remaining Padgitt lands were hereinafter called the Day-Padgitt Ranch; and the Miller lands, which included the Red Wire Pasture, were called the Day-Miller Ranch. [4] Together, the Padgitts and Millers immediately began enacting the subdivision of the ranches. Advertisements were placed in papers across the country to attract homesteaders to Coleman County; construction of houses, stores, a hotel, and a school *(HABS No. TX-3353)* was begun at the new town of Leaday; tenant farmsteads were staked out and fenced, and tenant houses constructed.

The Miller subdivision of the Red Wire Pasture into tenant farms was recorded March 29, 1908. [5] The silo site became a new tenant farm at a place called Elm Pasture located in the northern section of the Red Wire Pasture. The tenant house was constructed immediately, as it appears on a map of 1908. [6] The farm eventually was to include seventy-five fenced and cultivated acres, the house and a barn, a windmill and a tank, as well as water from Elm Creek on which the property front, And the silo. The tenant house, which no longer exists, was located about 200 feet to the southeast of the silo near Elm creek. It was a square, wood frame bungalow with a pyramidal roof, one of a number of such houses put up on new farmsteads across the Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller ranches in the years between 1906 and World War I.

For more detailed related information regarding the break-up of the Day Ranch into tenant farms, see HABS No. TX-3362, Leaday Townsite, and HABS No. TX-3363, Day-Padgitt Ranch Tenant House.

D. The Construction of the Silo

A member of the Miller family, W. A. Miller, was ranch manager on the Day-Miller Ranch from 1906 until the outbreak of World War I. Particularly interested in placing silos on several of the tenant farms, Miller contracted with Polk-Genung-Polk, a company which produced silo forms, and ordered cement from the Texas Portland Cement Company in Dallas. [7] He had purchased a rock-crushing machine, manufactured by the New Holland Machine Company in New Holland, Pennsylvania, to produce the aggregate for the concrete. It was his plan to use the cement, the wooden forms, and the machine, powered by an engine made by Detroit Motor Car and Supply Company, to construct silos in place on the tenant farms. In his correspondence with the New Holland Company, Miller mentioned he used the rock-crushing machine in the construction of some eighteen silos, sixteen feet in diameter and thirty-two feet high. [8]

Miller hired a silo-construction foreman, Ed Anderson, and urged tenants to join his Silo Club. the arrangement with tenants usually was based on an agreement that the ranch would lend the rock-crushing machine, the wooden forms, and hauling wagons used for mixing the cement, aggregate, sand, and water. The tenant would provide the labor. When not in use, the rock-crushing machine and other gear was stored at the ranch headquarters *(HABS No. TX-3351)* in one of the storage sheds, north of the main house. [9]

Miller's correspondence in the spring and summer of 1914 was concerned with the planning and construction of a silo at Elm Pasture, the tenant farm site under discussion. for this silo, the first to be constructed using professional equipment, Miller used paid labor. He, along with Anderson and his crew, made the foundation pour on April 7, 1914. The next day, the first ring was poured with the forms, with great success. [10] A representative of the Polk Company, makers of the forms, was on the site during these days and the succeeding period of the work project, and he and Miller redesigned the standard silo to include a feature they considered an improvement--a concrete chute attached to the silo structure and rose from the third section about 8 feet from the base. During a routine workday, the forms would be raised and plumbed, and the concrete poured in the morning. The afternoon would be spent filling, patching, painting and setting the reinforcing for the next day. Approximately 180 sacks of cement were used. Cost of labor for each succeeding silo was approximately $80.00. Total cost of each silo was approximately $350.00.

E. Subsequent Chronology

The silos constructed across the ranch were rarely used for their intended function. In this period, the grain production anticipated for the new tenant farms was never realized, and these small farmers found that they could store the grain for their range stock in bins and shovel it out in a manner more efficient and less time-consuming than putting their small amounts of grain in the silos. One family kept a pig in the silo of their tenant farm (the floor level was about 4 feet below grade, thus making a natural pen) that fed on the fodder left lying about and additional food from the house. The pig became so large it could not be lifted out and had to be slaughtered in the silo. [11] The Millers sometimes stored sorghum in the Elm Pasture silo. Ensilage, or green fodder, would be run through a mill to cut it into small pieces, then blown up the chute and into the silo through porthole-like openings which ranged up one side of the structure. [12] Although occasionally a tenant farmer might

store a small amount of ensilage in one of the silos, most often, these enormous and relatively sophisticated structures remained empty. Most of the silos were out of use altogether by World War I.

By the end of the war, many of the tenant farmers moved out of the area of the confluence of the Concho and Colorado rivers, discouraged by their efforts to make subsistence farming on land more suitable for cattle grazing. Their farms were reabsorbed into the Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller ranches and most of the tenant houses dismantled. Droughts, bad cotton markets and, finally, the Depression further depleted the resources as well as the population in the region. By the 1950s, the land-use in the area had returned to a ranching enterprise much like that initiated in the late 1870s by William Day. Today, the only physical reminder of the once-numerous little tenant farms is an infrequent silo, a handful of these tall structures still dot the pastureland across the ranches.

The Elm Pasture silo was probably out of use completely by the end of World War I. The tenant house on this farm was occupied by various tenants for a longer period than many of the other tenant places on the Day-Miller Ranch. Among the names of families associated with this place are Hannah, Waldon, Creek, Akery, Calder, Hamilton, and Ross. [13] The house and other improvements, aside from the silo, no longer exist.

II. THE SILO

A. Description

The silo is located on a rise of land on the north bank of Elm Creek about 200 feet northwest of the former tenant house site. It is composed of nine poured-in-place rings above a footing course. It rises to a total height of 36 feet; its thickness is 6-1/2-inches. From the interior of the silo, seven oval openings or "windows," each about 3 feet high and 2 feet wide, are visible. These porthole-like openings range up the wall of the cylinder, one above the other. The exterior faces of these openings are masked by a continuous concrete turret; this is the chute innovated on the site by Miller and the Polk Company representative. The connection or point where the chute meets the wall of the silo cylinder itself is a smooth taunt curve; therefore, it is smoothly integrated with the silo form. The chute projects to a dimension of about three feet; its base begins at the level of the top of the second silo ring and continues to the full height of the silo.

The quality of the concrete is exceptional, considering the circumstances of the silo's construction and the non-professional personnel involved in its erection. The final finish to the exterior surface was a wash of cement and lime.

B. Present Condition and Future of the Site

As mentioned above the other improvements made to this tenant farm by 1908, for example, the house, barn, fencing, etc., no longer exist; the foundations of the nearby house site are still visible. The silo is in excellent condition. The concrete shell wall below the lowest of the oval openings has been roughly broken down to the ground level to create a head-height opening; otherwise, there have been no changes or alterations.

In 1979, the Texas Water Commission granted permission to the Colorado River Municipal Water District, an entity based in Big Spring, to construct a large dam on the Colorado River. The site chosen was a location several miles downstream from Leaday, sixteen miles below the confluence of

the Colorado and Concho rivers. Early in the planning stages, a program was developed to address environmental concerns, including the impact of the proposed flood area on prehistoric and historic cultural resources. In 1980-1981, a survey of historic cultural resources was conducted by Freeman and Freeman, under contract to Espey, Huston and Associates, a firm of Austin environmental consultants. Subsequently, a number of other studies and amplifications of previous studies have been conducted. In early 1988, an Albuquerque, New Mexico, firm of environmental scientists, Mariah Associates, Inc., began further assessment of the area of the flood plain, including various archaeological investigations and assessments. Mariah has also acted in the role of coordinator of related projects, including this project--the recordation of nineteen endangered historic sites in the confluence area for the historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record. The sites were selected from a list compiled under the guidance of the Texas Historical Commission. Construction was finished on the dam in the late summer of 1989. Called the Stacy Dam and Reservoir, the project will inundate approximately 19,200 acres, and the threat of inundation of the silo site is possible in the near future.

Permanent easement to the site was granted to the Colorado River Municipal Water District by the Miller heirs in 1986. [14]

III. ENDNOTES

[1] Reference is to Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Record, vol. B, 572 and 573; Fort Bend School Lands to William H. Day, April 9, 1878.

[2] Martha Doty Freeman and Joe C. Freeman, A Cultural Resource Inventory of the Proposed Stacy Reservoir, Concho, Coleman and Runnels Counties, Texas, vol. II: Historical Cultural Resources, report prepared for the Colorado River Municipal Water District by Espey, Huston and Associates, Inc., Engineering and Environmental Consultants (Austin, Texas, March 1981), pp. 4-9.

[3] For a concise history of Leaday, see Glen Wilson's essay, "Leaday," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, A History of Coleman County and Its People, vol. I., (San Angelo, Texas: Anchor Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 268-269.

[4] Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Record, vol. 64, pp. 7-11, Willie Mabel Day Padgitt to Jo Zach Miller, October 1, 1907.

[5] Ibid., County Plat Record, vol. 68.

[6] Martha Doty Freeman et al., "Cultural Resources Survey, Testing, and Assessments in the Dam Construction Zone at Stacy Reservoir, Coleman and Concho Counties, Texas," an unpublished report prepared by Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Consulting Archaeologists (Austin, Texas, March 1989), p. 133. Martha Freeman had access to the files of the Day Ranch Company, part of the Miller papers now in the trusteeship of the Commerce State Bank, Kansas City.

[7] Ibid., p. 13.

[8] Ibid., p. 135.

[9] Interview with Elmo Hudson, Leaday, Texas, September 24, 1987; interview by Dan Utley, Texas Historical Commission.

[10] Freeman-Prewitt, pp. 135 and 136.

[11] Interview with Ralph and May Allen, Leaday, Texas, June 14, 1989; interview by Patrick O'Neill, Mariah Associates, Inc.

[12] Interview with Elmo Hudson, Leaday, Texas, June 23, 1989; interview by Patrick O'Neill, Mariah Associates, Inc.

[13] Freeman-Prewitt, p. 136.

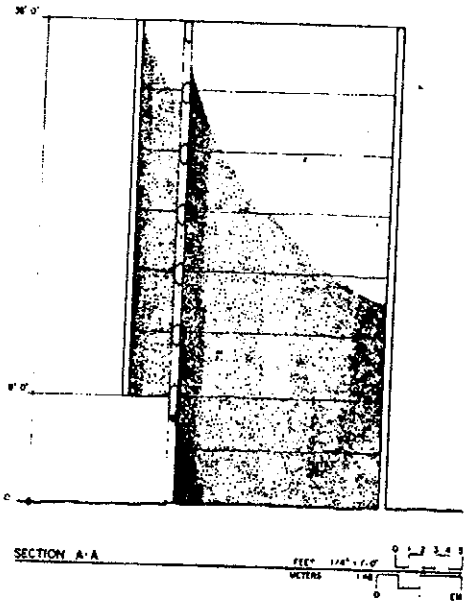
[14] Coleman County Courthouse, District Clerk's Office; Commerce State Bank of Kansas City (trustee for Jo Zach Miller IV et al.), grants of permanent easement to Colorado River Municipal Water District, December 22, 1986. This judgement on condemnation procedures is not yet filed on record.

IV. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Sketch plan of structure (see page 7).

V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by Mariah Associates, Inc., archaeologists; recorded under the direction of Greg Kendrick, HABS/HAER regional coordinator, Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Denver, Colorado. the project was completed during the summer of 1989 at the project field office at Houston and College Station, Texas. Project supervisor was Graham B. Luhn, AIA, architect; project architectural historian was Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University; intern architects were debbie Fernandez and Paul Neidinger; student architects were Brian Dougan, Robert Holton, Janna Johnson, Wayne Jones, and Pat Sparks, Texas A&M University; project photographer was Paul Neidinger; photographic processing by Laura McFarlane.



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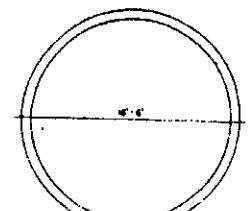

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